



Checklist for Recognizing Potential Reactions in Children and Strategies to Help Them Cope

Children may be affected by the increased threats as well. The information below lists normal reactions and how you can help children cope with them.

Normal Reactions in Children of All Ages

- ☐ Acts more aggressively
- ☐ Anxiety and irritability
- ☐ Clinging, fear of strangers
- ☐ Fear of separation, being alone
- ☐ Head, stomach, or other aches
- ☐ Increased shyness or aggressiveness
- ☐ Nervousness about what the future may bring
- ☐ Regression to immature behavior
- ☐ Reluctance to go to school
- ☐ Sadness and crying
- ☐ Withdraws
- ☐ Worry, nightmares

Preschool Age (1-5)

- ☐ Changes in eating habits
- ☐ Changes in sleeping habits
- ☐ Cling to parent
- ☐ Disobedience
- ☐ Fear of animals, the dark, "monsters"
- ☐ Hyperactivity
- ☐ Regress to an earlier behavioral stage, such as resuming thumbsucking, bedwetting
- ☐ Speech difficulties

Early Childhood (5-11)

- ☐ Becomes aggressive
- ☐ Changes in eating habits
- ☐ Changes in sleeping habits
- ☐ Competes more for the attention of parents
- ☐ Fear of going to school; the dark; "monsters"
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating
- ☐ Returns to "more childish" behaviors; for example, they may ask to be fed or dressed
- ☐ School performance drops

Adolescence (12-14)

- ☐ Abandons chores, schoolwork, and other responsibilities they previously handled.
- ☐ Becomes disruptive at home or in the classroom
- ☐ Begins to experiment with high-risk behaviors such as drinking or drug abuse

- ☐ Competes vigorously for attention from parents and teachers
- ☐ Resists authority

How to Help Children Cope

- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Take care of yourself
- ✓ Answer questions about what happened or what may happen honestly and at a level the child will understand, but don't dwell on frightening details or allow the subject to dominate family or classroom time indefinitely
- ✓ Don't be afraid to admit that you can't answer all their questions
- ✓ Encourage children of all ages to express emotions through talking, drawing, or painting, but allow silences
- ✓ Encourage children to express their feelings to adults (including teachers and parents) who can help them understand their sometimes strong and troubling emotions.
- ✓ Encourage children to participate in recreational activities
- ✓ Establish a family emergency plan, and include children in the process
- ✓ Give them lots of love
- ✓ Help children understand that there are no bad emotions and that a wide range of reactions is normal.
- ✓ Limit viewing of news coverage and when you do, watch it together so you can answer questions and provide support.
- ✓ Listen attentively to what children are saying and provide reassurance without minimizing their fears.
- ✓ Maintain routine and regular discipline
- ✓ Provide reassurance
- ✓ Provide verbal support
- ✓ Reassure youth that you are together, and you will do everything you can to protect them
- ✓ Spend extra time with them

For more information about normal reactions and ways to cope, call the Community Resilience Project toll free at 1-866-400-2951 (TTY: 703-228-4831) or visit www.communityresilience.com.